



**MECKLENBURG COUNTY**  
Health Department

July 28, 2014

**Health Update**  
**Public Health Process for Animal Bites/ Exposures**

Appropriate management of animal bites and prevention of rabies is a high priority community health concern. Prevention of human rabies depends on prompt reporting of animal bite/scratch/saliva exposures by patients, investigation by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control, post-exposure management recommendations by Public Health, and expedited treatment in Emergency Departments.

To assure the highest quality patient care and customer service, here is the step-by-step process that occurs when someone has an animal bite/scratch/saliva exposure in Mecklenburg County:

- When a person suffers an animal bite, scratch or saliva exposure, contact Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control (call 311 or fax at 704-336-5709).
- The animal control officer completes a bite report from information provided by the patient, family members, pet owners and police officers.
- The bite report is forwarded to Health Department Epidemiology Specialist, who interviews each person (and/or parents of children) to establish that an injury or exposure has occurred, and determines species of animal, rabies vaccination status of the animal involved, and risk of rabies in the animal. The Health Department utilizes the most current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. If necessary or appropriate, Health Department physicians, the NC State Public Health Veterinarian, and officials at CDC in Atlanta are consulted.
- If it is determined that an exposure has occurred, the patient is referred to the emergency department with a post exposure treatment recommendation, which is the official recommendation from the Mecklenburg County Health Department, based on current science and the North Carolina General Statutes. Post exposure treatment for rabies is not provided at the Health Department or at medical provider offices in Mecklenburg County.
- If applicable, the Health Department assesses uninsured patients for Medicaid eligibility, and if not Medicaid eligible, determines eligibility for replacement rabies vaccine and Rabies Immune Globulin (RIG) from the NC Division of Public Health. (Patients eligible for this program must receive services at CMC-Main).

If a patient presents to the emergency department without benefit of this process, we recommend that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control be promptly contacted to initiate the evaluation and treatment process. Please direct questions about the process to Stephen R. Keener MD MPH (704-336-4705), and technical questions regarding risk and treatment recommendations to José Peña (704-336-6440).

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